

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

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TAGS: ELAB, RP

SUBJECT: SUGAR PLANTERS GET EXEMPTION FROM COLA

REF: A. MANILA 7584, B. MANILA 6402, C. MANILA A-118

1. PRESIDENT MARCOS ON JUNE 15 GRANTED THE SUGAR PLANTERS AN INDUSTRY-WIDE ONE-YEAR EXEMPTION FROM HIS ONE MONTH OLD P. D. 1123, WHICH PROVIDED A COST OF LIVING ALLOWANCE TO ALL WORKERS EARNING 600 PESOS PER MONTH OR LESS (REF B.) HE DID NOT INCLUDE THE MILLERS IN THIS EXEMPTION. WHEN MAKING THE ANNOUNCEMENT, MARCOS ALSO URGED SUGAR PLANTERS TO RESPECT ALL OTHER LABOR LAWS, PARTICULARLY THE JULY 1974 P.D. 525 WHICH GRANTED THE ORIGINAL COST OF LIVING ALLOWANCE WHICH RANGED FROM 15 PESOS TO 50 PESOS PER MONTH. HE FURTHER CALLED UPON THE PLANTERS TO REHIRE THE SUGAR WORKERS THEY HAD BEEN FORCED TO LAY OFF. MARCOS ALSO RAISED THE DOMESTIC RETAIL PRICE OF SUGAR AS FOLLOWS. FOR BROWN SUGAR, PACKED FROM P1.60 TO P1.80 A KILO. FOR WASHED SUGAR, PACKED, FROM P1.80 TO P2 A KILO. FOR REFINED SUGAR, PACKED, FROM P2.05 TO P2.30 A KILO.

2. BEHIND THE SCENES, ZOILO DE LA CRUZ, PRESIDENT OF THE NATIONAL CONGRESS OF UNIONS IN THE SUGAR INDUSTRY OF THE PHILIPPINES (ACUSIP) PRESENTED THE DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

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WITH AN EIGHT PAGE POSITION PAPER OPPOSING THE REQUESTED COLA EXEMPTION. HE ALSO ORGANIZED A CAMPAIGN TO HAVE A PETITION SIGNED BY THE SUGAR WORKERS ON JULY 4, PHILAM DAY. PRESIDENT MARCOS LEARNED OF THE PROPOSED PETITION AND SENT A MESSAGE TO ACTING SECRETARY OF LABOR INCIONG TELLING HIM TO HAVE DE LA CRUZ CANCEL HIS PLANNED PETITION. PART OF THE ACUSIP POSITION PAPER DEALT WITH A RECOM-

MENDATION TO INCREASE THE RETAIL PRICE OF SUGAR FROM 63 PESOS TO 90 PESOS PER PICUL AS A MEANS TO PERMIT THE SUGAR PLANTERS TO REPAY THEIR LOANS TO PNB AND TO MEET THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE NEW COLA.

3. IN GRANTING THE NEW PRICE INCREASE AND THE EXEMPTION, THE UNIONS FEEL THAT MARCOS HAS GIVEN THE PLANTERS A DOUBLE BREAK AT THE EXPENSE OF THE WORKER AND THE CONSUMERS. THEY RECOGNIZE THE NEED TO KEEP THE SUGAR INDUSTRY VIABLE BUT FEEL THE PRESIDENT GAVE THEM MORE THAN VIABILITY.

4. COMMENT: THE SUGAR PLANTERS ARE AMONG THE WORST EMPLOYERS IN THE PHILIPPINES. MANY HOLD BACK ON PAYING THE SOCIAL AMELIORATION FUND, THE 13TH MONTH BONUS, THE 1974 COLA AND THEN JOIN IN ON THE POVERTY SONG. AS STATED IN REF A, SOME PLANTERS HAD GRANTED THE PD 1123 COLA TO THEIR WORKERS. ON THE MORNING OF JUNE 15 THE TUCP OFFICIALS CONFRONTED ACTING SECRETARY INCIONG ABOUT THE QUESTION OF WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO THOSE PLANTERS WHO ALREADY PAID THE NEW COLA. INCIONG EVADED THE QUESTION. ONE WONDERS WHAT TO EXPECT FROM SUGAR PLANTERS WHEN THE PRESIDENT HAS TO REMIND THEM TO PAY THE NEARLY THREE YEAR OLD COLA HE PREVIOUSLY DECREED.
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